



Weathering the worst solar storms

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When the last really big solar storm hit in 1921, Earth's magnetic field funneled a wave of electrically charged particles toward the ground, where they induced a current along telegraph lines and railroad tracks, setting to telegraph offices and train stations—and the fledgling electric grid went dark. Almost a century later, today's grid is bigger, more interconnected, and even more susceptible to a solar storm disaster. Los Alamos National Laboratory is developing a scientific analysis about how frequently a major geomagnetic storm might strike, which regions of the country are most vulnerable, and how bad it might be. This analysis is part of a plan to support electric utility companies and government regulators in taking the necessary steps to spare us all from the nightmare of days, weeks, or even months without power.

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